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ABSTRACT

During the 1980-81 school year, Indiana schools identified 5,652 limited English proficiency (LEP) students. Compilation of data since 1975 relating to Indochinese refugee students revealed the following information: almost all Indochinese refugee students long for social acceptance at school; almost all LEP students initially have a tremendous drive to acquire English language skills; almost all LEP students interviewed indicated that they could have learned more English than their teachers taught them; the majority of LEP students are visually oriented and accustomed to rote learning; almost all LEP students are very observant and are willing to adopt their peers' behavior patterns. Among the actions taken by local education agencies in Indiana when they find out about the enrollment of a LEP student are to coordinate 2 to 6 hours of inservice training for the involved teachers with the State Department of Public Instruction, to provide an intensive English program without credits for a semester, and to encourage LEP students to imitate good learning behaviors of motivated students. Cultural characteristics of this population include that the majority of Indochinese refugee parents consider that education is one of the most important experiences for their children and that Asian children respect their elders especially their teachers and show this respect in such ways as nondirect eye contact and not initiating conversation. (SB)

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Title:

INDIANA EXPERIENCES WITH LEP STUDENTS PRIMARY WITH INDOCHINESE REFUGEE CHILDREN

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During this school year (1980-1981) the Indiana State Department of Public Instruction has identified 5,652 students out of approximately 1,200,000 students enrolled in Indiana schools who have limited English proficiency. Three-thousand-nine-hundred and thirty-one (3,931) of these students are in elementary schools and one-thousand-seven-hundred and twenty-one (1,721) students are in secondary schools.

Even though a state bilingual education law has existed since 1976, no funds have been allocated for that purpose to date. However, we presently feel that we can provide an effective educational program for LEP (limited English proficient) students. We haven't yet convinced all local education agencies (LEAs) with LEP students to implement this type of program. The program requires a great deal of commitment by the involved principal and classroom teachers. However, at schools where such programs have been implemented, the educators are very proud of themselves and their LEP students. Normally LEP students are functional in regular classrooms within four (4) months. Some of the LEP students achieve above average grades by the end of the first year. The majority of these students require a supplemental program for a period of not more than two years. Compilation of data relating to Indochinese refugee students since 1975 has revealed the following information:

1. Almost all Indochinese refugee students long for social acceptance at school. However, they don't consider the attention that they receive from students with the same

ethnic background as evidence of such.

2. Almost all LEP students have initially a tremendous drive to acquire English language skills. However, their desire declines a great deal if they don't succeed in learning English language within the first four months.
3. Almost all LEP students who were interviewed indicated that they could have learned more English than their teachers had taught them.
4. The majority of LEP students are visual oriented and are accustomed with rote learnings. Thus the "look and say" approach is more effective than the phonetic approach during the beginning stage. During the initial period their auditory discrimination skill is not at a sufficient level to identify some sound differences in English which do not exist in their primary language.
5. Almost all LEP students are very observant and are willing to adapt to their peers' behavior patterns. However, they don't display their adopted behavior patterns consistently.

Many LEAs in Indiana do the following when they find out about the enrollment of a LEP student:

1. A school administrator coordinates 2-6 hours of in-service training for the involved teachers with the State Department of Public Instruction. In-service training consists

of three segments. They are:

A. The new student's cultural background and his/her behaviors that might be different from existant student's.

B. Tips and techniques in ESL (English as a second language) teaching that work in regular classroom situations.

C. Classroom management - how to fulfill LEP student's needs while a teacher teaches a classroom full of students whose needs are so different.

2. A LEP student is placed in a class according to his/her age level. If possible, no more than one LEP student from the same language group will be placed in a class. Then a teacher or a counselor will organize a hosting group for the first six weeks formed from LEP student's peers so that the LEP student will have someone to accompany him/her to eat, walk, study and even go to a rest room. Additionally, LEP students are strongly encouraged to join in clubs - soccer, cross-country, chess, etc.

3. If LEP students can not communicate with their teachers, they are tested in two areas: basic math computational skills and listening proficiency in the English language. Normally, math tests are made by teachers while Beihm is popular checking on listening comprehension for the elementary level and Ilyin Oral Interview for intermediate and secondary level students. If LEP students have some proficiency in four skills (listening, speaking, reading and

writing) of the English language, they are tested in four skill areas in order to determine student's proficient levels in English.

4. Some schools, especially for junior high and high school students, believe very strongly that LEP students should be placed in the top level of classes and use different instructional materials. Two reasons for their belief are:
   A. LEP students are encouraged to imitate good learning behaviors of motivated students rather than non-motivated students.
   B. Motivated students are more patient and are willing to give up their time to help LEP students than non-motivated students. However, there are at least six classroom teachers of elementary schools who state that their average or below average students are more willing and patient with LEP students. Additionally, they tend to excel more as they put themselves in a situation of teaching LEP students.
5. Even though classroom teachers will do their best to provide a warm comfortable learning situation, they are sure to set up the same standard for discipline like they do for other students. LEP students who are unfamiliar with the school environment in this country, consider anything they do or get away with as the American way. Some teachers, who felt sorry for them and pampered them by bending some rules, later regretted the outcome.

6. For LEP high school student's credit, basically, the schools in Indiana are adopting two approaches. One is to provide an intensive English program without credits for a semester. With this approach, at least two English teachers are assigned to a LEP student so that the LEP student will have at least two or three English classes in addition to a study hall period when ESL resource teacher or peer student will work on one to one base. We found out that the program with more than one teacher involved as key person is far more effective than the program with one ESL teacher who works with the LEP student for a half day. The rest of the daily schedule covers math, P.E. or music with credits. The second approach is to let one LEP student take any subject for credit. Subject area teachers, in addition to teaching their content area, focus as well on English language development. LEP student grades are determined independently based on what he was taught in a class.

7. In order to raise the English language proficient level of LEP students, the following points are considered as keys to success:

   A. Each teacher plans specific daily instructional objectives and activities for LEP student so that the student won't waste his time in class.

   B. Common formula is the introduction of ten new words and one new sentence structure each day. Teachers are

to teach survival vocabulary words within context.

C. A teacher is only involved in the introductory phase of teaching new words with sentence and explaining each meaning by gesturing and/or showing visuals. Subsequently, the words in a concrete situation will be introduced before abstract situation (i.e. What did you eat last night? How did you like it?) The rest of learning phases (drills, selection and application) will be guided by peer students, a tutor or independent study. In this way, a teacher will plan daily activities such as drills are under someone's supervision.

D. The daily plan has emphasis on vocabulary expansion and comprehension skill development rather than articulation in pronunciation. Also, learning activities are designed in such a way that the LEP students will be using already introduced words and sentences frequently but in less time for each succeeding period. Additionally learning activities include the development of four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) simultaneously rather than oral language development first than reading and writing activities.

E. Finally from the first day of learning, LEP students are expected to do many independent studies as their daily homework. Intermediate and older students are assigned to do at least a couple hours of homework every day for English language learning.

8. The final segment of this presentation deals with the cultural backgrounds of Indochinese refugee children in school in Indiana. Teachers with some understanding of their LEP student's cultural heritage can teach far more effectively than teachers without such understanding.

   A. The majority of Indochinese refugee parents consider that education is one of the most important experiences for their children. Therefore, they encourage their children to complete their homework assignment thoroughly. Many parents are willing to sit by their children until the homework is done. They even welcome the opportunity to study together with their children.

   B. Asian children respect their elders especially their teachers. They show their respect by the following behavior problems:

      1. Non-direct eye contact: By not giving any direct eye-contact, the students show their respect. Some teachers in this country interpret such behavior as undesirable and insist that these students look at their teachers when the teachers are talking. It will only take a few weeks before Indochinese students adopt to American students behavior and look their teacher in the eye.

      2. They do not initiate conversation: Indochinese children are always taught to wait until they are spoken to. Teachers are advised to start a

conversation every day in order to elicit student's oral responses.

C. Indochinese students consider volunteering to answer is a kind of show off. The teachers should ask questions providing the students the opportunity to respond.

D. Indochinese students are not accustomed to body contact by a teacher. However, later they seem to like to be touched by the teacher. Nevertheless, Laotian children do not enjoy a pat on the head by their teachers. Laotians consider their head as being the place where their highest spirit resides.

E. To Asian children, a loud voice is a sign of anger. Some American teachers tend to use a louder voice when communication is difficult. It is suggested that you use simpler sentences and repeat slowly rather than loudly.

F. Indochinese children are not used to exposing each other in the shower room. Special consideration should be provided in P.E. class during the initial adjustment period.

G. Indochinese children are not accustomed to co-education: Initially assigning a student with the same sex for a group study will be more comfortable.

H. Indochinese children are more used to the teacher centered approach and are not used to the problem solving

approach or the self-directed type of studying. Thus initially participating in a group for such study rather than individual assignment is more effective.

I. Once communication has started, don't give up or don't try to use an interpreter. The students can easily lose their confidence of being able to communicate in English.

J. You should demand that LEP students complete their assignments while possibly given more time. Accepting incomplete assignments will result in students developing poor study habits.

K. Provide the LEP students with none of your high expectations and offer continuous encouragement: Indochinese students' motivations tend to rely upon their teacher's high expectation. They will study hard to please their teachers.

L. Avoid the question, "Did you understand what I said?" Instead use different ways to find out the LEP student's comprehension, otherwise, Indochinese students will say "yes" to teachers even when they don't understand their teachers because they want to avoid embarassment.

M. Smiling does not mean happiness to Asian students. They smile in order to cover up their embarassment or sadness.

N. Whether they are culturally different or not, commonnality of a human being is greater than being culturally

different. Those children do feel, eat and clothe like any other person. Concerned, willing teachers are the key to successful programs.